

Bernard Davis, Harvard Professor Of Medicine and Author, 78, Dies

By **ERIC PACE**

Dr. Bernard D. Davis, a Harvard Medical School professor who attracted widespread attention in a 1976 dispute about medical schools' admission standards, died on Friday at his home in Belmont, Mass. He was 78.

The cause was prostate cancer, said his wife, Elizabeth.

Dr. Davis was the Adele Lehman Professor of Bacterial Physiology at the medical school from 1968 until 1984, when he retired. He joined the faculty in 1957.

In 1976, in the "Sounding Board" section of The New England Journal of Medicine, he asserted that academic standards in American medical schools had declined in recent years as the result of the admission of some members of minorities with substandard academic qualifications.

Officials at Harvard termed Dr. Davis's action "irresponsible." Among those who disputed his assertion was Dr. John A. D. Cooper, president of the Association of American Medical Colleges, who responded that students admitted to medical schools had increas-

ingly higher grade averages and test scores, even as more minority students were being accepted.

Dr. Davis later explained that he was not talking about all minority students, but was "raising questions about a small fraction." He also apologized for his share of what he called the "misinterpretation" of his article by the press.

He was born in Franklin, Mass., and graduated in 1936 from Harvard College. In 1940 he graduated summa cum laude from Harvard Medical School.

His writings included the book "Storm over Biology: Essays on Science, Sentiment, and Public Policy" (Prometheus, 1988).

He married Elizabeth Menzel in 1955.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by two sons, Jonathan, of San Francisco, and Franklin, of Newton, Mass.; a daughter, Kate, of Manhattan; a brother, Lawrence, of Boston; two sisters, Dr. Evelyn Waltzkin and Marion Cahan, both of Brookline, Mass., and two grandchildren.



Dr. Bernard D. Davis